

Nine were taken aback by the call in the *Messenger* for a meeting of white citizens at eleven o'clock on the morning of the ninth at the courthouse.⁵⁹ Because early reports from the polls proved to Democratic Party leaders that their campaign had succeeded and that their party had won an overwhelming victory, men such as Rountree were prepared to rest on their laurels. Surprised by the announcement, Rountree attended the meeting and observed that he had "never seen more people in the courthouse" as Alfred Moore Waddell was called to the fore.⁶⁰ It was a "respectable representative assemblage of business men,

⁵⁹ Hayden and others credit Hugh MacRae of the Secret Nine for calling the mass meeting, presumably to address the issue of Manly and to pacify hot-headed Red Shirts ready to burn the press on the evening of the election. Several sources indicate that the mass meeting was definitely scheduled somewhat ahead of time by someone outside of the main Democratic Party campaign committee. Hayden stated that on the afternoon of the election, Mike Dowling and the Red Shirts were prepared to burn the *Record* press and lynch Manly. En route to the press, Dowling met MacRae, who persuaded Dowling to stop his men so as not to jeopardize the election. MacRae and Dowling met at L. B. Sasser's Drugstore. Sasser, also a member of the Secret Nine helped MacRae convince the Red Shirts to desist in return for revealing some of the machinations of the Secret Nine to Dowling in the form of a document they had drawn up that has come to be known as the "White Declaration of Independence." The WDI was to be read in public the next day at a meeting MacRae called to pacify Dowling. *The Morning Star* featured an article to call "every good white citizen" to the meeting that was called as a result of another meeting held the night before by a group of "representative businessmen of the city." Hayden, *Story of the Wilmington Rebellion*, 6-9. Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 107; *Morning Star*, (Wilmington), November 9, 1898; *Wilmington Messenger*, November 9, 1898.

⁶⁰ Rountree recalled that he had stayed up almost all night on election day and that, on the morning of the ninth, he was at home "sleeping the sleep of the just when my wife came in about nine o'clock and showed me an advertisement in the paper that stated that there would be a public meeting" that he had not known was planned. Rountree, *Memorandum*, Henry G. Connor Papers.

merchants, lawyers, doctors, divines and mechanics."⁶¹



New Hanover County Courthouse
Image Courtesy of Lower Cape Fear Historical Society

Many of the city's business leaders were present. Speakers included newly elected congressman John D. Bellamy, who claimed no prior knowledge of the meeting's purpose.⁶² Waddell explained that he did not know what the meeting was about but had been asked to read a statement.⁶³ The

⁶¹ *Contested Election Case*, 257.

⁶² Bellamy claimed that in his remarks he "approved of the desire to rid the community of such a venomous reptile," but urged that they "act with moderation and proceed lawfully and in order." *Contested Election Case*, 257.

⁶³ Roger Moore's widow confirmed that Waddell knew nothing of the planning done by the business leaders. She said that Waddell "was not present at any one of the meetings and knew nothing whatever of the plan of action until the night following his election as mayor, when he asked the leaders for